

## Strategy 18

# Text Annotation

GRADE LEVELS: 2–12

Getting Started
Building Background
Vocabulary
<b>Reading Closely</b>
Comprehension
Discussion
Writing

### CCSS Anchor Standards: Reading

- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1** Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.2** Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.3** Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.4** Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.5** Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.6** Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.7** Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.8** Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.9** Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

## What Is It?

Text Annotation is a strategy that facilitates close reading of texts and involves having students interact with a text by creating a record of their thoughts while they are reading. Teachers often have students annotate a text during their first and/or subsequent readings of a complex text during a Close Reading lesson, but annotation can be used as a strategy on its own. Sometimes referred to as reading with a pen, annotation typically involves using symbols, circling words and phrases, putting question marks next to new words, or using bullet points to note key ideas. It also includes marginalia, or recording notes about the text in the margins. Annotation can be used with any text, in any content area, at any grade level.

## What Is Its Purpose?

The purpose of Text Annotation is to engage students in thinking deeply about a text by recording their thoughts on the text. Through this physical interaction with the text, students have a record of their thoughts that they can refer to after the reading is finished. They can share these ideas with partners or with the entire class.

## What Do I Do?

### Preplanning

1. Select an informational text for use during any reading experience.
2. Carefully read the text.
3. Identify the aspects of the text that are important to your lesson. For Close Reading, this means analyzing the text for complexity (see Strategy 3). Areas of focus can include any combination of the following:

Difficult vocabulary

Author's tone

- Text structures
- Main ideas
- Key details
- Text features (captions, footnotes, headings)
- Supporting evidence
- Student questions

- Author's message
- Claims and arguments (Lapp, Moss, Grant, & Johnson, 2015).

**4.** Determine what annotation symbols you will use and how students will annotate. Examples are provided on page 123. You may want to create a poster showing these.

## Instruction

- 5.** Explain and model the annotation process using the annotation system you have chosen. This may include both symbols and marginalia (on page 123).
- 6.** Have students annotate their texts. Remind them to refer to the class poster that illustrates each symbol. Don't have them use more than a few symbols at first and gradually increase the number over time.
- 7.** Engage students in paired and group discussions of their annotations.

## Example

Fourth-grade teacher Kevin Garcia wanted his students to learn the skill of annotation. He felt that many of his students were “surface” readers; they would skim and scan to get main ideas, but really didn’t dig deeply into texts. He thought that teaching them to annotate would give them a tool that would help them read more thoughtfully. His students were studying inventions, so he selected the description of the invention of the Slinky in *Toys! Amazing Stories Behind Some Great Inventions* (Wulffson, 2000) for a Close Reading and Annotation lesson. He decided that students would use annotation for their first reading of the text. Because his students had not annotated before, he knew it was essential that he model this practice.

Kevin began the lesson by explaining that annotation is a reading skill that can help students record their thinking about a text by writing on it. He then directed student attention to the poster below, which contained the annotation symbols. He

### Annotation

(Circle) confusing words.

Write a ? mark next to confusing ideas.

Write a comment in the margin telling why it is confusing to you.

Underline the main ideas. Write a note in the margin telling how you know it is the main idea.

Draw an → to show connections between ideas.

did not want students to have to remember too many symbols for this first experience with annotation. Notice that the chart shows symbols as well as ways for students to use marginalia.

Kevin reviewed the symbols on the annotation chart and shared the text on the document camera. He explained that this text excerpt focuses on how Richard James invented the Slinky toy. He directed students' attention to the first two paragraphs of the text. In these paragraphs the author explains that Richard James had been hired to create a stabilizing device that would keep ship navigational instruments level. Kevin thought aloud as he thought aloud (see Strategy 20) and read the text aloud:

"OK. As I am reading this sentence, I see the word *stabilizing*. I will circle this word with my pencil because I'm not sure what it means. Later in this paragraph I see the word *counterbalance*, and I don't know what it means, so I will circle it as well. The text goes on to say that 'Richard's job was to come up with something that would counterbalance the instruments so that they would be level at all times.' I will place a question mark next to this sentence because I am not clear on what it means. I will write a note in the margin that says 'confusing' because why do instruments need to be level? I think that maybe this has something to do with the stabilizing device mentioned earlier, so I will draw an arrow between this sentence and the one mentioning that."

Following this modeling, Kevin gave students the opportunity to practice this new skill. Students annotated the remainder of the text, using at least two of the symbols and marginalia suggested on the poster. Following this, students discussed their annotations with a partner, then shared out with the larger group. During this time, Kevin elicited student feedback about unknown terms, confusing ideas, and so on. This feedback helped him scaffold student understanding during subsequent text readings.

## References

- Lapp, D., Moss, B., Grant, M., & Johnson, K. (2015). *A close look at close reading: Teaching students to analyze complex texts K–5*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Wulffson, T. (2000). *Toys! Amazing stories behind some great inventions*. New York: Holt. (I)

## Your Turn!

The Text Annotation Planning Guide on the facing page will help you plan an informational text annotation lesson with your students. The annotation symbols and marginalia ideas can be distributed to your students and they can check off the ones you want them to use. For younger students you may only teach the first four symbols, while for older students you may use more. The marginalia examples may be combined with symbols, as in the example above.

## Text Annotation Planning Guide

**Instructions:** Complete the Annotation Planning Guide below. You may want to copy the Annotation Symbols for Student Use so that each student can refer to it.

Text Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Lesson Standard: \_\_\_\_\_

Lesson Objective: \_\_\_\_\_

- 1.** What annotation symbols will I teach students?
- 2.** What will students write in the margins?
- 3.** How will I explain/model annotation using these symbols and marginalia?
- 4.** What will students discuss after completing their annotations?

### Annotation Symbols for Student Use

- **(Circle)** confusing words.
- Write a ? mark next to confusing ideas.
- Underline the main ideas.
- Draw an → to show connections between ideas.
- Write EX next to an example the author gives.
- Draw a star ★ next to words, ideas, or concepts you have learned in other classes.
- Number key ideas 1, 2, 3.

### Marginalia

- Write a *comment* in the margin about an idea you found interesting.
- Paraphrase key parts of the text into your own words. Write this in the margin.
- Explain why you think a specific idea is the main idea.
- Draw a picture or diagram in the margin that helps you understand something you read.
- Explain in the margin why you thought a word or idea was confusing.